

HOUSTON POST

## Public doubts of CIA challenged by Bush

By TERRY KIEWER  
Post Reporter

CIA Director George Bush Friday challenged presumptions the nation lacks confidence in his agency, and he vowed to continue cooperating with congressional groups looking into CIA operations.

"I'm not sure how much confidence is lacking," he told reporters at a news conference at the Rice-Rittenhouse Hotel. "Some things have been wrong . . . but the abuses of the past are in the past."

Bush added: "I think the American people support the concept of a strong intelligence agency. If they don't, they'd better."

He acknowledged the CIA's image "is not what it should be," but he said putting "a PR (public relations) gloss" on the agency would not be appropriate.

Bush said he hopes negative publicity swirling about the CIA will not mean a lower agency budget this year.

"I hope Congress will support the budget levels suggested by the President . . . I don't see any widespread effort to cut it."

The CIA's new director also said the spy agency can continue to do its job by using new measures aimed at increasing outside oversight of its operations.

"We should disclose and disclose fully to Congress," he added, "but Congress will have to protect (secrets)."

Bush said his track record thus far as director amply shows his intention to cooperate with Congress. He has visited Capitol Hill 19 times in 3 months in official appearances since assuming his office, he said.

Bush is making his first visit to Houston, which he still calls home, since his return from China, where he was the U.S. envoy. He addressed the annual meeting of the YMCA of Greater Houston at a Friday night banquet at the hotel.

Explaining at the outset to reporters that he would not comment on political matters or on sensitive intelligence issues, Bush declined to comment on only a handful of questions.

But he did note U.S. relations with Red China are not likely to change in view of continuing political turmoil there. And he also commented that the CIA, and the federal government generally, did not know Cuba's intentions in Africa before the outbreak of the Angolan war.

"We're still unclear what (Cuba) intends to do," he said. "It's very hard to predict."

Bush would not discuss prospects his own job as CIA director—a Presidential appointment—might hang in the balance in the November election. He said he was not concerned with "job security" in his new position, and he repeated previous statements that he has no political plans.